

February 23, 2022

Testimony Regarding HB 5037 - Dental Reimbursement Rates
Appropriations Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

Respectfully submitted by Roberta R. Friedman, ScM

Dear Senators Kushner, Cicarella, Osten, Hartley, and Miner, Representatives Abercrombie, Betts, Walker, Dathan, Nolan, and France, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Roberta Friedman and I am a registered voter in Hamden, CT. I am testifying in my role as a public health professional who has studied the issue of dental care for poor people. I am also a board member of the CT Oral Health Initiative.

The proposed increased reimbursement rates for adults seeking dental treatment on HUSKY are greatly appreciated, especially the proposed endodontic rate matching the children's rate. However, I am concerned that the 25% increase is too small to increase provider participation. **In order to increase provider participation in Medicaid, adult dental reimbursement rates need to be increased to parity with the child rates.**

It is a painful reality that because low-income people can't get the routine care that would save their teeth, they end up in emergency rooms, and often get their teeth pulled. This is because there are not enough dentists who will take Medicaid because of the low reimbursement rates. The average wait time for a root canal is four months. Can you imagine living with that kind of pain for that long? I can't, and I'm privileged enough not to have to. But good dental care ought to be a right, not a privilege.

Please consider increasing the adult Medicaid reimbursement rates to bring them to parity with the child Medicaid rates. This will allow family dental practices to accept Medicaid patients of all ages.

Thank you for your time and for supporting access to care in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Roberta R. Friedman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Roberta" being more prominent.

Roberta R. Friedman, ScM
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